

I yield back this weak and foolish national security policy we have in place.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, the challenge before this body this week and the next several weeks is passing 13 appropriation bills. The challenge is based on whether or not we are going to stick by the promise that we made in the balanced budget agreement of 1997. At that time most of the Democrats and most Republicans voted for that balanced budget agreement.

That balanced budget agreement included setting caps on future spending. Keeping that commitment means that for the next fiscal year we will not be spending any of the Social Security surplus.

Now the question is—can we keep that commitment? Can we keep that promise? Last week we passed what we called a lockbox, again stating that we are not going to spend the Social Security surplus dollars for other government spending programs. Let us keep our commitment. Let us keep our promise to the American people. Let us not jeopardize current and future Social Security recipients by caving in to the big spenders.

#### GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago the Republican leadership in this House told us that we could not vote on gun safety legislation before we left for the Memorial Day break because we needed to have a hearing in committee, needed to go through the proper legislative process.

Ah-ha. Well, now they are bringing this legislation to the floor with no hearings and with no markup. So what was the 2-week delay all about? It was about giving the NRA a head start. We took the Republican leadership at their word that they would play it straight with gun safety legislation. But now it appears that they spent the last 2 weeks scheming with the NRA to bring down gun safety legislation.

With their 2-week head start, the NRA has launched a 2-week campaign of fear. They have spent more than a million dollars in the last several days to kill gun safety legislation.

I am here today to ask to plead with the Republican leadership in this body to stop playing games with gun safety. This debate is about protecting our children. Thirteen children a day are killed by gunfire in the United States

of America. This is about saving kids' lives.

This vote on gun safety is deadly serious. There is no more room for political games. Let us stop the games. Let us pass gun safety legislation for our families and for our children.

#### U.S. MILITARY SHOWING SEVERE SIGNS OF STRAIN

(Mr. TANCREDO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, American military success in Kosovo has shown once again that American forces are second to none in the world. Our brave pilots and many thousands who work around the clock to support them deserve our highest praise and our deep gratitude.

However, the military operation in Kosovo has also exposed the problem in our national defense structure that we need that needs immediate attention. Our military is undermanned, overextended, and showing severe signs of strain after having to do more with less for too long.

The defense appropriations bill on the House floor later this week is an excellent first step to reverse the trend and to end the damage to the short-changing of the U.S. military. I urge its support.

#### COMMEMORATING LIVES OF D.C. FIREFIGHTERS

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to commemorate the lives of two brave young firefighters who gave their lives in a fire in the District while Congress was out of session. Both firefighters were born and raised in the Nation's Capital.

The loss is not only to their families but to the Congress of the United States and to this city, where D.C. firefighters prepare every day to do what is necessary to protect both hometown Washington and official Washington, including the Members of this House.

Anthony Phillips of Engine Company No. 10 worked the busiest fire house in the Nation. Only 30 years old, he was the father of two boys, one 21 months old, the other 6 years old. Firefighter Phillips married his childhood sweetheart, Lysa. They were a deeply loving couple and family.

Louis Matthews of Engine Company No. 26 was only 29 years old but served 7 years as a D.C. firefighter. He leaves a loving family, including his mother, Cassandra Shields, and two young children.

Members of this body have been mindful of the risks firefighters face

and the sacrifices that their families could be called upon to make. I am grateful that the 105th Congress passed my bill, the Officer Brian Gibson Tax Free Pension Equity Act, that allows the families of firefighters killed in the line of duty to receive survivors' benefits tax free. They did their duty, and I am grateful that we did ours.

#### SPIRIT OF FREEDOM AWARD

(Mr. DEMINT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I presented to Mobile Meals of Spartanburg, South Carolina, the first Spirit of Freedom Award. Every day Mobile Meals volunteers deliver as well as prepare over 1,700 meals to needy people in my district, all without government funding. The people at Mobile Meals have shown me that freedom comes from the able hands of local people, people who take responsibility for themselves and their communities.

Here in Washington, we can either protect or take away those freedoms. I believe it is our role in Congress to be the guardians of freedom. That is why we are working to return dollars, decisions and freedoms to the hands of local people.

I thank Mobile Meals for showing us that freedom begins at home.

#### RAISING ELIGIBILITY AGE OF MEDICARE RECIPIENTS

(Mr. SANDERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, this Nation already has the most unfair distribution of wealth and income in the entire industrialized world.

Given that reality, it is absurd that some in Congress are talking about giving huge tax breaks to some of the wealthiest people in this country while at the same time they are talking about raising the eligibility age of Medicare to 67, charging a 10-percent copayment fee for home health care, and voucherizing Medicare, which would mean more out-of-pocket expenses for seniors in this country.

Mr. Speaker, 111 members of Congress have written to the President. We have urged him, do not raise the eligibility age of Medicare to 67, do not charge a 10-percent copayment fee on home health care to some of the weakest and most vulnerable people in this country, and do not force seniors to pay more out-of-pocket for their health care costs.

I urge all Members of this body to join us.